



State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and Family Services**

Jim Doyle, Governor  
Helene Nelson, Secretary

**Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Re-estimate**

	FY 04		FY 05	
	GPR	All Funds	GPR	All Funds
Increase to base	\$5,644,200	\$9,996,500	\$9,503,900	\$17,478,200

**Description of Proposal**

- Fully funds the cost of state special needs foster care and adoption assistance based on projected caseloads.

**Background**

- The State foster care and adoption services program provides funding for out-of-home care payments for special needs foster children who are awaiting adoption as a result of termination of parental rights (TPR) and for ongoing adoption assistance payments for families who adopt special needs children.
- Special needs children are defined as children for whom it is difficult to find an adoptive home because of factors such as: age, being a member of a sibling group that must be placed together, being a member of a minority race for whom placement resources are not available, or special emotional, behavioral, physical or personal needs. Once parental rights for a special needs child have been terminated, the child moves from county to state guardianship.
- The Department administers all out-of-home placements for special needs children. Department staff and partner agencies in regional offices and contracted staff in Milwaukee County are responsible for arranging adoptions for special needs children.
- Adoption assistance for special needs children is administered by the Department for all counties.

**Rationale for Proposal**

- The Governor's budget provides additional funding for the program based on caseload projections for 2003-2005 and makes no changes to eligibility or benefit levels.
- The need for additional funding is driven in large part by the state's dramatic success in recent years in increasing the number of adoptions for special needs foster children. In CY 02, 1,050 special needs adoptions were finalized statewide, an increase of 34 percent over the previous year.
- The state has achieved more special needs adoptions because of the efforts of adoption staff in the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare and the Department's Special Needs Adoption Partnership. Through the Partnership, the Department contracts with private adoption agencies to increase the number of special needs foster children who are adopted.
- Increasing the number of annual adoptions is very beneficial for children because it provides them with permanent, stable and safe home settings.

- The number of children in state foster care has also been increasing as the result of the recent federal Adoptions and Safe Families Act. The Act sets timelines states must follow for proceeding with TPRs for children who are in out-of-home placements.